THE

UNANIMOUS REMONSTRANCE

OF THE

FOURTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

HARTFORD, Conn.,

AGAINST THE

Policy of the American Tract Society

ON

THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY

HARTFORD:
FOUNDRY OF SILAS ANDRUS & SON.
1855.
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At a meeting of the Fourth Congregational Church of Hartford, Ct., held Nov. 23d, 1854, it was voted unanimously to appoint a Committee of three to investigate the facts connected with the policy pursued by the American Tract Society on the subject of Slavery. The Pastor, (Rev. Wm. W. Patton,) John Hooker, Esq. and Mr. Milo Doty were constituted the Committee.

This Committee, at a subsequent meeting, which was very fully attended, recommended to the Church the accompanying form of a letter of remonstrance to the Officers and Directors of that Society, which was unanimously adopted, and a copy ordered to be forwarded to each Officer and Director, and to be published in so many of the religious newspapers as might be willing to insert it.

Attest, Wm. W. Patton,

Pastor and Clerk.

LETTER OF REMONSTRANCE:

TO THE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS OF THE AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

Brethren:—The eminent civil and religious position which many of your number hold, combined with your well-known interest in the cause of piety and philanthropy, induce us to address you, and through you the Christian community, with respect to certain relations and influences of the national benevolent society over which you preside. It is scarcely necessary for us to express our approbation of the object for which the American Tract Society was instituted, and which it has for more than a quarter of a century so successfully pursued. The fact that some of us are numbered among its life-members and life-directors, and that as a church we have for many years contributed to its funds and aided in the distribution of its publications, is evidence of our sentiments on that point. We have believed the circulation of a religious literature common to all evangelical Christians and selected from among the productions of the most eminent living and departed authors, to be an agency for good, both at home and abroad, with which the church could not wisely dispense. It has been our gratification, also, to observe the wisdom and propriety with which the operations of the society have in most respects been conducted, so that its efforts and success have surpassed those of any other benevolent publication society. The selection of books and tracts has been highly

judicious, the style of publication in mechanical respects has been eminently chaste and attractive, and there have been displayed on the part of those entrusted with its management, a business tact and energy which would have done credit to the most noted secular establishments. Entire perfection of method and policy during an extended work of twenty-nine years, the society would not claim, nor would we flatteringly ascribe. We have reason, also, to believe and affirm, that the operations of the society have been blessed of God to the production of the happiest Christian results in our own land and in foreign countries. The private Christian and the pastor, the home missionary and the foreign missionary, have felt themselves strengthened by its influence and have welcomed it as a most successful auxiliary; while multitudes both on earth and in heaven praise God for the agency which, by his direction, it had in their conversion. How, then, could we feel other than the deepest interest in the continued prosperity of such an organization?

It is the fact of such an interest, coupled with our regard for other aspects of the cause of Christ, that induces us to address you, the honored Officers and Directors of this honored society, upon a subject closely connected with its appropriate object and its future prospects. We come forward with friendly interest to offer a criticism upon one feature of its policy, upon which we and others have looked with pain, and which we desire to see give place to a course of action more in harmony with what we humbly conceive to be the spirit of the Gospel, the design of the society as described in its constitution, the aspects of Providence, and the growing desire of a large portion of the individuals and churches which have supplied the society's treasury with such ample funds.

It can scarcely have escaped your observation, as you have mingled with Christian circles and have perused the contents of religious newspapers, that evidences of discontent have manifested themselves with regard to the policy which has been pursued by the American Tract Society upon the subject of American Slavery—a subject which for many years has agitated church and state, and is likely to engross the attention of God's people in a still greater degree in time to come. As it is possible, however, that your attention has not been sufficiently turned to this point, you will pardon our more particular reference to it.

First of all, we may bear our personal testimony to the fact. From intercourse with fellow-Christians, both ministers and laymen, dwelling in all parts of the free states, we *know* that such a feeling as the one just indicated, extensively prevails; that it is rapidly on the increase; that while embracing not a few of the mature and experienced, it is fast possessing the minds of the younger portion of the ministry; and that it is absolutely necessary that something should be speedily done to meet and pacify it. This topic is gradually forming a prominent subject of conversation in ministerial and laic circles, and the leaven of discontent is working beneath the surface to a degree which the various officers and managers of the society do not suspect.

We next advert to the fact that this feature of the policy of the society is engaging the attention of local churches, whose members are forming and preparing to express their opinions. The action of the Congregational church in Manchester, Conn.—one of the most staid, intelligent, and influential churches of this vicinity—published in the *Religious Herald* of the 19th ult., is an indication of a feeling which will ere long manifest itself somewhat generally

among the churches of New England. This action in the Manchester church was unanimous. After expressing "deep and tender interest in the American Tract Society as an institution of great usefulness," and concluding to forward a contribution for the present year, though decreased in amount as we understand, the church condemned "the policy of the society to maintain perfect silence on the subject of American Slavery, as wrong, and calculated, if persisted in, to alienate many of its most efficient friends, and to cause them, however reluctantly, to withdraw their confidence and support."

As another indication of Christian opinion, we refer to the fact that the two newspapers most widely circulated and ably edited among the Congregationalists in the Eastern and Middle states—to wit: the *Congregationalist*, at Boston, and the *Independent*, at New York—have repeatedly and pointedly condemned the policy referred to, in which numerous smaller papers at the East and West concur, besides the able and influential Quarterly known as the *New Englander*—altogether representing a wide-spread sentiment through the free states.

Moreover, the subject has engaged the attention of the ecclesiastical bodies of the North somewhat generally, but especially among the Congregationalists, from whom larger donations, it is believed, flow into your treasury than from any other denomination. Some of these bodies have refused to take action on the subject; but, even in such cases, large and influential minorities appeared. Others have delayed action until another year, for the purpose of inquiry and consideration. Several have expressed their views decidedly in opposition to the course pursued by the society, and we will briefly refer to the action of those whose record of proceedings happens to be at hand. About two

years since, the Congregational Union of Fox River, Ill., adopted a letter of remonstrance to your society on this subject, ably discussing the principles applicable to it, and stating that "good men can give but a hesitating support to institutions of powerful but defective influence," to which Rev. R. S. Cook, one of your secretaries, replied, defending the society's policy. After a careful consideration of this reply, the Union reaffirmed their sentiments, and declared themselves unconvinced by the secretary's logic.

In 1853, the General Association of Massachusetts passed the following vote nearly or quite unanimously:

"*Resolved*, That while the General Association of Massachusetts entertain a profound regard for the large publishing societies, and rejoice in the great good they are accomplishing, they would express an earnest desire that these societies would not make the subject of slavery an exception in their efforts to rid the world of all iniquity by diffusing throughout it an evangelical literature, but would set forth in their publications the sentiments of our common Christianity on the enormous sin of slavery, with the same freedom and faithfulness with which they exhibit and rebuke all other sin."

The present year the subject again came up, and a committee was appointed to confer with the delinquent societies.

The attention of the General Association of New York was also called at its recent meeting to the same defect, and a committee was raised to report upon it the ensuing year.

The General Association of Michigan appointed a committee in 1853, to examine and report upon this matter, which they did at the meeting the last summer, severely censuring the society. The report was adopted with but a single dissenting vote. After an earnest address from Rev. Dr. Bacon, of New Haven, Conn., who was present,

and who bore a very decided testimony against the society's policy, a resolution was adopted, calling upon the society to do at least so much as to publish a tract composed of quotations from Scripture bearing on the various elements of oppression which enter into slavery.

The Council Bluffs Association, of Iowa, at its recent meeting, on the 12th inst., after expressing their gratification that the "American Board" had "decided to treat the sin of American Slavery as it would treat any other sin that so directly opposes the evangelization of the world," passed the following:

"*Resolved*, That we long to see the American Tract Society, and the American Sabbath School Union, and other benevolent societies, take similar ground."

The Central Association of Illinois have, within a few weeks, taken action to the same effect.

Not to multiply instances further, suffice it to quote the following action of the General Association of Iowa, taken in June last:

"*Resolved*, That our confidence in the American Tract Society and in the American Sunday School Union is greatly impaired by the course they have taken in expunging anti-slavery sentiments from their publications, and in refusing to speak out plainly against the sin of slavery, while they testify freely against every other prevailing sin."

These facts prove, that we do not represent a small, discontented, and insignificant faction, but that a feeling of displeasure and disgust is spreading rapidly throughout the North. The words of remonstrance come from every quarter. The old Puritan state of Massachusetts raises its voice of protest, and the echo returns to us from the far-off prairies of Iowa.

We proceed then to state definitely the grounds of our dissatisfaction, that you may judge, as those accustomed to weigh evidence, whether our complaints are reasonable. In this we have nothing to do with the motives of those who have managed the society. We are quite willing to allow that it has been their intention so to administer its affairs as best to secure the end for which it was instituted. A serious mistake, however, we do allege, and one of a most mischievous nature, which, when discovered, it becomes the society immediately to rectify. However natural and excusable the original error, persistence in it will shake public confidence in the wisdom and integrity of the committee and directors.

I. The first charge which we bring against the society, is one of *suppression*. It has in sundry instances suppressed the anti-slavery opinions of authors whose works it has rëpublished. Those sentences which have condemned slavery as sinful, have been stricken out. This has been done not merely by way of general abridgement, but for the avowed purpose of avoiding the expression of sentiments which would be distasteful to slave-holders. Though the fact is admitted, and you are probably acquainted with some of the details, yet as many who will see this letter are not so familiar with them, we will adduce sufficient proof to exhibit the nature of the suppression alluded to.

It pleased your society to rëprint a work of that venerable Boston minister of the Puritan age, the Rev. Cotton Mather, D. D.—to wit: his "*Essays to Do Good*"—and in the preface you declared:

"In this edition, such portions of the original essays are omitted, and such changes have been made in the phraseology, as might be expected after the lapse of more than a century since the work was written"—

language which honestly implied that the changes and omissions were simply of obsolete phrases and of matter which had no application to any thing at the present day. What will the public say of the following alterations and suppressions on the subject of slavery—a subject which, so far from being by-gone, never attracted so much and so necessary attention as at the present time? On page 44, Tract Society's edition, occurs this sentence:

"O that the souls of our servants were more regarded by us! that we might give a better demonstration that we despise not our own souls, by doing what we can for the souls of our servants. How can we pretend to Christianity, when we do no more to christianize our servants?"

By turning to the correct edition of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, page 102, it will be seen that Cotton Mather wrote "*slaves*," and not "*servants*," in those sentences, and that between the two you have suppressed these words:

"And not using them as if they had no souls! That the poor slaves and blacks which live with us, may by our means be made the candidates of the heavenly life!"

On the same page, a little below, you have suppressed an entire paragraph, as follows:

"But if any servant of God may be so honored by him as to be made the successful instrument of obtaining from a British Parliament 'an Act for the Christianizing of the slaves in the plantations,' then it may be hoped something more may be done than has yet been done, that the blood of souls may not be found in the skirts of our nation; a controversy of heaven with our colonies may be removed, and prosperity may be restored; or, however, the honorable instrument will have unspeakable peace and joy in the remembrance of his endeavors. In the mean time, the slave-trade is a spectacle that shocks humanity.

"The harmless natives basely they trepan,
And barter baubles for the souls of men;
The wretches they to Christian climes bring o'er
To serve worse heathens than they did before."

As we do not find this book on your recent lists, and as your edition was severely criticised a few years since for *doctrinal* omissions and alterations, we suppose the offensiveness of those doctrinal changes has led to its entire suppression.

There is a curious fact in connection with the different editions to which we may properly refer. After its publication by the author, the work remained out of print, we believe, till issued in England, under the editorship of Rev. Mr. Burder, who undertook to modernize the phraseology. When he came to the passages above, he omitted them, stating, however, in a note at the bottom of the page, that the author had there made remarks concerning slavery, which, being happily inapplicable to that country, (England,) were omitted. Mr. Burder's edition was followed in the reprints in this country, all of which inserted his note. But your edition suppressed the note, and thus left the reader in ignorance of what the author had done. The English editor made omissions because they were *inapplicable* to his country; but you suppress the same passages because they were *applicable to yours!*

In the Tract Society's edition of *Mary Lundie Duncan*, the following passage, found on page 67 of Carter's edition, is suppressed:

"We have been lately much interested in the emancipation of slaves. I never heard eloquence more overpowering than that of George Thompson. I am most thankful that he has been raised up. O, that the measure soon to be proposed in Parliament, may be effectual!"

On page 87 of Carter's edition, is found a reference by

the biographer, to the departure of "George Thompson, the eloquent pleader for the abolition of slavery," to visit the United States to advocate his cause there. That reference is suppressed, as are also the stanzas, on page 80, which Mary Lundie Duncan addressed to him upon that occasion, from which we quote the third and eighth:

"Yet go, heaven-favored hero, go!
Pursue your glorious plan;
Abridge the weight of human woe,
And raise the slave to *man*.

"Heaven bless your cause! your country's prayers
Attend you o'er the sea!
Go, break the chain that slavery wears,
And bid the oppressed be free."

Again, on pages 106, 107, similar suppressions are found of phrases which speak of the emancipated slaves in the West Indies, as "no more degraded lower than the brutes —no more bowed down with suffering from which there is no redress," and as now being able to "seek the sanctuary fearless of the lash," and "to call their children their own."

We hear that the authoress has recently consented to have the book remain on your list thus altered, *rather than have it wholly suppressed*. But why did you not consent to restore the omitted passages, or at least those which did not refer to and endorse Mr. Thompson as an individual?

We learn, moreover, that the author, Mrs. Lundie, while in this country, was seen by one of your secretaries before the society rëpublished the work, and though urged to consent to this mutilation, absolutely refused, declaring that the lines sought to be suppressed, were precious to her for their sentiment and for her daughter's sake; that the secretary then reminded her that, as there was no copyright for it in this country, the society could go on and publish it in such form as they wished; and that she replied, that

she knew she was in their power, and they could do as they pleased.

The society publish also an edition of J. J. Gurney's "*Habitual Exercise of Love to God;*" but before consenting to do so, the committee constrained or induced the author, no doubt by the plea of greater usefulness, to consent to suppress the condemnation of slavery which his treatise contained in its remarks upon love to man. The original edition reads, page 142:

"If this love had always prevailed among professing Christians, where would have been the sword of the crusader? Where the African slave-trade? Where the odious system which permits to man a property in his fellow-men, and converts rational beings into marketable chattels?"

In the Tract Society's edition, page 142, after the first question, it reads:

"Where the tortures of the Inquisition? Where every system of oppression and wrong by which he who has the power revels in luxury and ease at the expense of his fellow-men?"

Of such suppressions as these we complain, both on general grounds of opposition to all alteration and suppression of a writer's peculiar sentiments, and also because of the specific wrong in connection with slavery. You will remember the agitation caused a few years since by the discovery that the Tract Society had been guilty of similar suppressions with reference to doctrinal opinions propounded in works which it republished, and the virtual pledge of a different policy for the future which it gave, and to which we presume it has adhered. The principle contended for then, covers the case now before us. If the society does not like the sentiments of the author, it is under

no obligation to rëpublish his works; but if it does so, his opinions should stand in their integrity. This is peculiarly true in a biography, which professes to describe the individual as he was. To suppress the allusion to his peculiar principles or practice, on any point, is to do him injustice and to defraud the public. And then as to the particular direction which the policy of suppression has taken in the instance before us and in those of a like nature, we feel a special burden of grief; for, if there be any subject with reference to which the truth which has been once uttered should not be suppressed, it is American Slavery. If holy men and women have at any time been outspoken against this curse and shame of our land, in God's name, let the fact appear! There is sufficient power enlisted in its support, and there are men enough who do and say nothing for its overthrow. Diminish no influence which is bearing against it; blot out no condemnation which pious souls have uttered. To say the least, the appearance of your suppressions is that of a subserviency to the dictation of slave-holders, such as no self-respecting men, and last of all, the conductors of a religious society, should ever evince.

II. Our second and similar charge, is, one of *studied and persistent omission.* It has been the deliberate policy of the Society, in its numerous tracts, volumes, and monthly papers, not to utter a direct condemnation of the most giant iniquity of our land. Slavery, which reduces three millions of fellow-men to property, deprives them of knowledge, takes away from them the Holy Scriptures, makes a race of heathen in a Christian land, robs them of liberty, compensation for their labor, the rights of marriage and of the parental relation; which sustains an internal slave-trade, equal in horror to that between Africa and Cuba, and in fifteen of our states inflicts untold cruelties and per-

petuates crimes of nameless abomination; slavery, which corrupts the master, degrades all honest toil, hinders all public improvement, and is a most formidable obstacle to education, religion, and the unity of our nation in its ecclesiastical and political relations—this "sum of all villanies," as John Wesley justly termed it, has never been directly and purposely recognized by the American Tract Society as a sin deserving distinct discussion and condemnation!—And yet its Constitution declares its object to be, "to promote the interests of *vital godliness* and *sound morality*"! Is it astonishing that men of anti-slavery principles are beginning to be disgusted with such a policy? The Society has issued in the course of twenty-nine years some six hundred distinct tracts, and nearly three hundred separate volumes of various sizes, in which it has waged a Christian warfare upon almost every conceivable sin; and yet its first distinct, direct, and intended assault is yet to be made against a sin more than almost any other, open, flagrant, and ruinous—a sin which is a greater blight and corruption to our politics, literature, and religion, a greater disgrace to our country, and a greater hindrance to the universal triumph of the gospel, than any other practice which can be named! By an examination of the titles of the tracts of the Society—which, however, are a very insufficient guide to the subjects discussed—we find that the Society has been outspoken in condemnation of the following vices and immoralities, to wit: profanity, Sabbath-breaking, use of intoxicating drinks, covetousness, gambling, breaches of the seventh commandment, attendance upon the theatre, dancing, gayety and extravagance in dress, novel-reading, and sleeping in church. Now these are doubtless grave sins, and worthy of marked reprobation; and we would give due honor to the Society which has placed its condemning

brand upon them; but to think that these should have been selected, and slave-holding omitted! It is this contrast of treatment which makes the policy of the Society equally notorious and culpable, bringing upon it by a necessity of mental association, an application of the words of the Saviour, "Ye blind guides, who strain at (out) a gnat and swallow a camel." If the Society did not profess to notice immoralities, if it avowedly confined itself to an inculcation of evangelical theological doctrine, the omission in question would be unnoticed; but when it deliberately enters upon the work of securing a "sound morality," and proceeds in numerous tracts to set forth the flagrant wickedness of showy and expensive dress, of the practice of social dancing, and of the habit of sleeping in church, and then passes by American Slavery, the inconsistency is too gross to escape detection.

We are aware that in some of the earlier publications of the Society, such as Beecher on Intemperance, the writers, while discussing other sins, have dropped by a passing phrase, and, in the way of illustration, an incidental condemnation of slavery as sinful, showing that *then* the Society was not so rigid in its policy as now, and corroborating our statement hereafter made, that formerly there was an agreement among evangelical Christians as to the iniquity of the system. We have also perceived with pleasure, that in the commentaries on the Bible from the pen of Dr. Justin Edwards, published by the Society, he avoids placing a pro-slavery construction on any passage, and asserts general principles favorable to liberty, though he does not any where directly condemn slave-holding as sinful. Probably the officers of the Society are not themselves aware of all the incidental allusions referred to above, and would scarcely thank any officious friend who should collect and publish

them, so that they would meet the eye of the South. Even under a strict censorship, something will occasionally escape notice and get into print.

We cannot, however, regard such trifling and indirect reflections, occurring in rare instances in the midst of volumes on other subjects, as the discharge of duty, or as practically affecting the charge of studied omission. Especially can we not consent that the Society should have them culled out by agents at the North, and *orally* stated as showing an anti-slavery policy in the Society, while the Secretaries *publish* to the world that the Society does not and can not commit itself on this subject. The policy of the Society must be taken from the official statements of those who manage its affairs. The letter of Secretary Cook in reply to the Fox River Union, is such a statement, in which he argues for entire silence on this subject, and defends it as the policy of the Society.

We contend that such a policy is a wrong to all the parties concerned. It is a wrong to the slave; for it withholds an influence in his favor, which, if exerted, would be felt throughout the entire land, and would hasten by years the advent of his freedom. It is a wrong to the slaveholder; for it aids to perpetuate his blindness and to confirm his sin. It is a wrong to evangelical Christianity; for it virtually declares that slavery is not held by evangelical Christians to be inconsistent with "sound morality." It is a wrong to the South; for it is a false friendship, concealing the disease which is consuming its very vitals. It is a wrong to the North; for it subjects the religious literature, the publication and circulation of which is principally paid for by Northern money, to the offensive and degrading censorship of the South. It is a wrong, you will permit us to add, to your own souls, brethren who conduct the Society;

for its tendency is, to induce you to overlook the woes of the slave, to fellowship the sinning master, and to cultivate a habit of sophistical reasoning in the endeavor to avoid unwelcome duty.

We are aware that those who have officially and unofficially represented the Society, have urged certain grounds of defence before the Christian public, and as we would not seem to evade arguments which some have deemed forcible, we will briefly state and answer those which have fallen under our notice:

1, It is alleged, that to publish on the subject of slavery, would be to turn aside from the specific object of the society. Were this the case, we should acknowledge the sufficiency of the defence. We would not have the society undertake a work for which it was not organized. We do not propose to have it become specifically an anti-slavery society, any more than an anti-gambling society, or a temperance society. But as it does not shrink from uttering Christian truth with respect to gambling and intemperance, as it meets them in the prosecution of its comprehensive work, so we desire it to make no exception of slavery. The specific object of the Tract Society, as set forth in its constitution, is sufficiently general to include all violations of the moral law, and whatever is offensive to genuine piety; for the first article declares, that "the object shall be to diffuse a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of sinners, and to promote the interests of *vital godliness* and *sound morality*." It would seem in this day of light, to require no argument to prove that slavery is opposed to "the interests of vital godliness," and is inconsistent with "sound morality." But if such be its character, you are authorized and even required to publish tracts and volumes in its condemnation.

2, It is next urged, that another clause of the first article of the constitution, forbids the circulation of works which do not meet the approbation of all evangelical Christians, and that the society, according to article sixth, can publish nothing to which a single member of the publishing committee shall object. Hence it is argued, that as slavery is a disputed topic among evangelical Christians, and as different views would be entertained by different members of the publishing committee, it is not possible for the society to make any reference to it. The latter half of this objection is easily disposed of. Let it once be decided that the society will issue tracts and volumes on this subject, and it will be no difficult matter to select a publishing committee from the different denominations, who *will* agree upon anti-slavery works, new or old.

With reference to the former part of the objection, we would submit certain considerations which we think will entirely relieve a point which has labored in many candid minds. There need be no doubtful construction of the article in question. We rely upon well-established principles of interpretation. Where the meaning of a written document is in dispute, that interpretation which harmonizes most perfectly with the letter and spirit of the instrument, and which can appeal to uniform and long-continued practice under it, must necessarily be true; for it combines every element of correctness for which any class of interpreters, be they loose or strict constructionists, can contend. To such a test we propose to submit our view of the meaning of that part of the Tract Society's Constitution to which reference is now had.

The first article reads as follows: "This Society shall be denominated the American Tract Society, the object of which shall be to diffuse a knowledge of our Lord Jesus

Christ as the Redeemer of sinners, and to promote the interests of vital godliness and sound morality, by the circulation of Religious Tracts, calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians." That the directors of the society have not been very rigid in the construction of this article where favorite ideas were to be carried out, is evident from the fact that the words "Religious Tracts," which have always had a definite meaning as referring to small unbound pamphlets, have been stretched to include large bound volumes on the one hand, and monthly newspapers on the other. Why those who have no scruple in thus expanding the fundamental idea of the society beyond the prescribed limits, should suddenly become so conscientious in adhering to the letter of the constitution in other respects, is not so clear as could be desired. But we are prepared to appeal to the very letter of the constitution, as permitting the publication of anti-slavery tracts, even though some who are evangelical Christians should not approve of them.

(1.) We contend that the clause in question, refers only to a doctrinal difference of a theological character, and to the sentiments of denominations rather than individuals. Almost every word in the sentence, and every fact in the origin and relations of the society, demonstrates this. The design of the society was informally to unite the various evangelical denominations in the publication of those doctrinal and practical tracts which would not come in collision with the *peculiar* tenets of any of the associated *sects*. A reference to all the explanations of the necessity and design of the society, contained in the early reports and magazines and appeals to the public, will prove this. Indeed, the fact is too notorious for denial. To express this idea was the intention of the clause in question, and no reference what-

ever was had to *merely practical* points in which there might be and must be differences of judgment among *individuals*. The use of the word "evangelical" supports this idea, for it shows that the founders of the society were thinking only of avoiding those subjects which divided the various sects of evangelical Christians, which subjects are ecclesiastical and doctrinal in their nature, and not ethical or practical. What peculiar relation has the subject of slavery to the differences of *evangelical* Christians? It is neither a point in dispute between them on the one side, and heretics on the other, nor is it a dividing line between any two denominations of themselves. The fact, then, that the constitution employs the word "evangelical" in the connection, proves that no reference was had to subjects of mere practical judgment, but only to those of a doctrinal nature.

Then again the word "calculated" favors the same view. The tracts must be "*calculated* to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians;" that is, they must be such as do not interfere with denominational peculiarities, and of such a Christian character as should properly commend them to all true followers of the Lord Jesus. This does not require that *every individual* evangelical Christian shall actually approve *every sentiment* published by the Society; which were absurd, and would make your whole enterprise impracticable. But it is enough, if the tracts do not theologically offend any evangelical denomination, and if their inculcations are such as ought to please sanctified minds. Anti-slavery tracts can easily be supplied, meeting these reasonable conditions.

All this is further corroborated by the sixth article, which reads thus: "To promote in the highest degree the objects of this Society, the officers and directors shall be elected

from different denominations of Christians; the Publishing Committee shall contain no two members from the same ecclesiastical connection; and no tract shall be published to which any member of that committee shall object." Here again the use of the words "different denominations" and "ecclesiastical connection," proves, that all that was aimed at in the way of exclusion was, to prevent the publication of doctrinal or ecclesiastical matter offensive to *denominations as such.*

(2.) To make our position invincible, and to show that these are not after-thoughts of hypercritical minds striving to extract a given idea from given words, we refer with confidence to the whole practice of the Society from the beginning to the present time, as sustaining and illustrating the distinction which we have made. Take the publications of the Society, and examine the subjects discussed and the sentiments propounded. Are they such as secure or even claim to secure the unanimous verdict in their favor of "all evangelical Christians" exercising their *individual* judgments? Not at all. Far from it. They avoid topics of doctrinal discussion, but not of difference of practical judgment as to duty. They do not discuss election, or baptism, or liturgies, or church government; but they do discuss practical points on which "evangelical Christians" widely differ among themselves, as individuals, and not as denominations. Thus the Society publishes over twenty tracts against the manufacture, sale, and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage. But "all evangelical Christians" are not agreed in that position. There is not a denomination represented in the Society that does not contain members and ministers who use such liquors, and defend the practice from the Bible. Not only so, but to render the case still more decisive, it will be found, if we go abroad

and include the old world, that the overwhelming majority of evangelical Christians reject the sentiments taught by the Society on that point. The "evangelical Christians" of Great Britain, France, Germany, and Switzerland, have never as a body, or by more than a mere fraction, say one-tenth of their number, given in their adhesion to the doctrine that total abstinence is a Christian duty. A far larger proportion of evangelical Christians through the world are opposed to slavery, than are opposed to the use of intoxicating beverages. And yet you publish against the latter, and refuse to condemn the former! The Society publishes several tracts against dancing as a social amusement. Are "all evangelical Christians" agreed in this view? Ask our Episcopal brethren. Ask the pastors of the city churches among all the evangelical denominations. Ask the Christian world in Europe. The sentiments of many of your tracts on that subject are repudiated by thousands of "evangelical" families, even among those who contribute to your funds. The same may be said of ideas advanced in tracts against card-playing, and other forms of gambling, Sabbath-breaking, attendance on the opera and theatre, and novel-reading. No one of them would receive the approbation of all "evangelical Christians," and some of them would even be condemned by a majority. Why then do you publish them? On what ground do you rest your defence against the charge of having violated your Constitution from the beginning? You must resort to the very distinction which we have raised. You must claim that these are not topics which divide evangelical *denominations, as such*, but only lead to differences among individuals irrespective of denominations. The distinction is valid, and we ask you to apply it to the

subject of slavery. If you attack the sin of slave-holding, you may come into conflict with *individual* judgments among evangelical Christians, but you will cross no denominational lines. No Methodist, nor Episcopalian, nor Presbyterian, nor Congregationalist, nor Baptist, *as such*, will be wounded. Why then repudiate an interpretation of your Constitution upon which you have impliedly acted from the beginning, merely to escape responsibility with reference to slavery?

(3.) We also insist, that the overwhelming majority of Christians in this country are so far agreed on this subject as to allow the publication of numerous tracts in which they would accord. They might differ as to whether a voluntary retention of the legal relation of slave-owner always involved guilt and deserved church discipline, and they might also disagree as to the best time and method of emancipation. But they are agreed with respect to the unrighteousness of the *general system* as defined and protected by the slave-code, and as sustained by ordinary practice. They are agreed in the condemnation of the internal slave-trade, the separation of parents and children and husbands and wives by sale, the non-existence of legal marriage, the exaction of unpaid toil, the use of the lash and other instruments of torture, the prohibition of other than oral instruction and consequent denial of the Bible to the slave, the rejection of colored testimony in the courts, depriving the slave of all legal protection, and other practices which enter into American slavery as it is. They are also united as to the duty and policy of emancipation in some way, and at as early a period as practicable. Upon each of these points a tract might be written, according with the convictions of nineteen-twentieths of the evan-

gelical Christians of the land, and running counter to no denominational peculiarity.

(4.) We furthermore urge, that such disagreement as exists upon the topics just mentioned, is entirely of recent origin, and is owing to the apostacy of the Southern churches from the common faith of evangelical Christendom; for extended proof of which fact, we refer to an able article in the last number of the *New Englander*, (October, 1854,) from the pen of Rev. Dr. Bacon. In 1818, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church *unanimously* adopted a very strong expression of their abhorrence of the whole system, and its ordinary cruelties and wrongs. Not a minister or layman from the South voted against it, for it was *then* Southern as well as Northern evangelical doctrine, that slavery is of itself wrong, and should be abandoned as speedily as practicable. The sentiment was the same in other denominations. But since earnest anti-slavery men have pressed the duty which results from such a concession, the south have been driven by force of logic and conscience, either to abandon what they acknowledged to be wrong, or to take a new position, and deny the wrong. They have chosen the latter alternative, and in so doing, have apostatized from the universal faith of Christendom. But is that any reason why the American Tract Society should refuse to hold on the even tenor of its way, and abide by the faith of the Christian world? Shall it refuse to adopt as one of its tracts the unanimous declaration against slavery of the General Assembly of 1818, or John Wesley's "*Thoughts on Slavery*," once universally acceptable, because within twenty years there has been a wide-spread apostacy from the evangelical faith in one section of the land? If so, then if a similar retrogression of correct sentiment should occur with reference to the

sale and use of intoxicating beverages, the society would feel bound to strike all its temperance tracts from its list? Men of principle ordinarily see in the fact of apostacy from correct doctrine, an additional reason for proclaiming the truth. If, then, there was once a universal, and is now a prevailing sentiment among evangelical Christians against slavery, then the Tract Society should echo it in their publications, not swerving from the path of duty because in a certain section personal interest and the necessity of logical consistency in evil, have induced professed Christians to deny what they once admitted.

(5.) Nor is it improper that we should suggest the exceeding impolicy of the construction which you place upon the constitution of the society. Its tendency is to drive anti-slavery Christians from your support, and to make it necessary for them to sustain a new and rival society. We do not desire such a result, if it can be avoided. But if you thrust your constitution in our face, and declare that it is impossible for you to comply with our request, what alternative do you leave us, but to withdraw and sustain a more comprehensive organization?

3, But it has been contended by some who advocate the continuance of the policy of silence, that it is really open to no charge of favoring slavery; that the society simply expresses no opinion on the subject, but contents itself with preaching the gospel and thus preparing the way for the ultimate emancipation of the slave, in the mean time leaving anti-slavery societies to do the work of opposing slavery specifically. But why not in like manner leave temperance societies to do the whole work of opposing intemperance? Why does the Tract Society also publish tracts upon that subject? Why does it denounce breaches of the seventh commandment in its publications, instead of leaving

the subject of chastity to moral reform societies? Had the society refused to publish on those points, would it not have been charged with withholding the truth? Where a subject meets us in the field of our operations, we cannot evade it without practically assuming a part in the controversy. Hence, Christ said, "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." The slave and his friends can say the same. You meet the sin of slavery in the direct prosecution of your work of "promoting the interests of vital godliness and sound morality." Your publications go where it prevails. Two hundred and fifty of your colporteurs labor in the midst of it. You are thus necessitated to take a stand for or against it. If you are silent on the subject, that is regarded as tantamount to a tacit approval or friendly toleration, especially as the mean while you are performing acts of fellowship with those who are guilty of the sin, and are thus endorsing their Christian character and standing. In this manner you omit an influence for humanity which you are bound to exert, and throw the weight of your position as a great national Christian society into the scale of slavery.

It is sometimes attempted to compare your relation to the subject with that of the Bible Society; but they are quite different. The Bible Society has for its single object to publish and distribute the Bible without note or comment. Its naked work is to circulate Bibles. It seeks to proclaim no truth in any other way. But the Tract Society aims at the very thing which the Bible Society leaves untouched, viz: the inculcation of specific moral and religious truth, or the application of the general doctrines and precepts of the Bible to the circumstances of men. And yet even the Bible Society may so conduct its cause as to connive at slavery. If, for instance, it refuses to give the Bible to

such slaves as can read it, and if it refuses to condemn the laws which prohibit the teaching of slaves to read God's Word, then it proves recreant to duty by not opposing slavery as it is met in the prosecution of the legitimate work of the society. We contend that a benevolent society is bound equally with individuals, to do all the good and remove all the evil that it can, in its natural sphere of action. As therefore slavery lies directly in your path, for your society not to notice it, is deliberately to avoid duty, and like the priest and Levite, to "pass by on the other side," leaving your robbed and wounded "neighbor" to perish. And will not Christ say, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me?" The omission of good is the commission of evil, an act of disobedience to the command, "As therefore ye have opportunity, do good unto all men." Vain is the thought of evading responsibility.

* * * "Fatal mistake! the dread account proceeds,
And our not doing is set down among our vilest deeds."

4. But lastly, it is argued in defence of the Society's past and present policy, that to publish any thing against slavery would result in the exclusion of the Society's agents and publications from the Southern States; that thus multitudes would be left without the gospel in any form, as no part of the land is more destitute of the means of grace; so that without benefitting the slave, the gospel would be taken from the poor whites, and also from the free colored population, sacrificing a real and present good to a mere abstract principle. This, we have reason to believe, is relied upon as the strong argument in opposition to the views which we present. That it is but a broken reed upon which to lean, can be easily demonstrated.

First, let us inquire whether the position thus taken in apparent defiance of the obligations which Christian principle imposes, is not an adoption of the maxim, "Let us do evil that good may come"? We have proved that the object of the Society, the claims of religion and humanity, and a sense of consistency, require you to attack slavery as you would any other prevailing sin. Is it then a sufficient answer, to affirm that to do so would embarrass the Society, and create opposition? Is it Christian, or is it Jesuitical—is it like Paul, or is it like Ignatius Loyola—to consent to suppress part of the gospel in order to preach the remainder? If there be a plain duty of rebuke owed to the slave-holder, and of compassion and aid owed to the slave, then no possible anticipation of success can justify the neglect of that duty. The apostle declares that "the damnation is just" of all who act upon the corrupt principle of doing evil that good may come. The prior question of duty, growing out of the unchangeable and impartial law of love, must be decided, before the claims of a low expediency can have a hearing.

We cannot but regard the principle thus avowed in defence of your policy, as corrupting in the highest degree. If consistently carried out, it would lead missionaries to China to avoid condemning the use of opium; missionaries to India to be silent with reference to caste; missionaries to Turkey to refrain from attacking polygamy; missionaries to Africa to be speechless concerning the slave-trade; lest the rulers or the populace should expel them from the country. Were it not better for religion that they should be expelled, rather than a compromise should be made of principle, and the nations should be presented with an emasculated gospel, devoid of purity and power?

You will soon have an opportunity of testing the opera-

tion of this principle in our own land, in a novel application of it. The territory of Utah is in the possession of the Mormons, who are rapidly filling it with cities and villages. You will of course send colporteurs to labor amid the population. The Mormon faith allows polygamy, and that sin is now extensively and publicly practised there under the protection of the authorities. Will you keep silence respecting it, lest your agents should be driven from the territory, and thus lose all opportunity of doing good? Will you expunge from your list all tracts in favor of chaste marriage, lest your Society be obnoxious to the Mormons? Will you consent to carry an antinomian gospel? To preach faith without works? To call upon men to repent, without specifying the sins which they notoriously practice? Surely you will not thus succumb to polygamy. Why then succumb to slavery upon a principle which you repudiate in its other applications?

This attempt to weigh out future consequences, and decide upon resultant good in advance, is a very hazardous matter. No man has foresight of the future sufficient to trace out all the results of a given course. Present appearances of a flattering nature are no proof whatever of the ultimate wisdom of a prescribed policy. Immediate success may be gained at the cost of eventual disaster. This fact, Swartz and other early Protestant missionaries to India unhappily demonstrated, when, to avoid conflict and *secure success*, they tolerated caste in the churches. Thousands were easily converted, and their policy *seemed* wise. But longer experience proved that they committed a disastrous error, as is now admitted by nearly all the missionaries in the field of every denomination. Converts who were allowed in a flagrant breach of the law of love, were found to be a source of weakness rather than strength. It is much safer, therefore, to be guided by general princi-

ples of right, leaving God to take care of the consequences. Let us illustrate from Scripture. John the Baptist was a great favorite with King Herod, who made him court chaplain, "heard him gladly," and even "did many things" at his suggestion. But John saw that Herod was living in gross sin, having formed an adulterous connection with his brother Philip's wife. What course should he pursue? Perhaps some of his disciples advised him to observe a prudent silence; not indeed expressing any approbation of the sin, but being careful not explicitly to rebuke it and contenting himself with reproving other sins about which Herod was not so sensitive, and with inculcating the general duty of fearing God. Perhaps they reminded him of the favor with which he was now regarded, of the many opportunities which he consequently had of exerting a good influence at court and throughout the nation, of the improvement which Herod had already made, and of the hope that might be indulged, that eventually he would himself see the sin of his adultery, and repent of it; whereas, were John to attack that sin directly, he would be disgraced and probably imprisoned and beheaded, and thus all hope of good be lost. But John despised this timid, compromising policy. He did his duty as a preacher of righteousness, and trusted God to protect his own cause. *Was he wise? Did he right?* Let universal Christendom respond its approbation. True, he was beheaded, and his career as a reformer terminated; but his example of faithfulness has done more for religion in all subsequent ages than could have been accomplished by thousands of converts at the court. It has inspired heroism in those called to combat with error and sin in each succeeding century, and not a day passes in which some struggling soul is not strengthened by the memory of that stern fidelity to truth.—Brethren, will not such be your influence, if you speak for God

and the slave despite the frowns of the oppressor? Will not the noble testimony thereby borne to the power of Christian principle, be a means of good beyond human calculation, as the knowledge of it shall spread from land to land, and be handed down from generation to generation? On the other hand, will not your silence aid to propagate a weak and shame-faced gospel, at which infidels will scoff, and which even Christians cannot respect? Will you not assist in recognizing and perpetuating a religion tolerant of slave-holding, which is to say, a religion tolerant of a system that is prolific of ignorance, wretchedness and heathenism? Thus amid apparent success you are destroying with one hand what you build with the other. You declare that the South is the most truly missionary field in the country; but you well know that slavery makes it such. Why not attack, then, that which is the source of such moral and religious destitution?

And are you not mistaken in supposing that by simply preaching evangelical doctrine and general principles of right, you are sapping the foundation of the whole system of slavery, and preparing the way for ultimate emancipation? Are you not aware that the Southern Church of all denominations now claims that the Bible is the best defence of slavery? Is it not an obvious and significant fact, that under the preaching of such a gospel as you propose to carry, slavery has increased for two hundred years, till professed Christians are as deeply involved in the sin as others, the curse has spread over fifteen states, and its victims number three millions? If, then, you pass through the states, fellowshipping those churches and ministers, and carrying an abstract theologic gospel which is silent respecting this great iniquity, how can your influence be favorable to liberty?

But has it never occurred to you, that some such act as

the expulsion of your agents and the exclusion of your publications from the South for opposition to slavery, may be the very thing which is needed to usher in the dawn of freedom? Suppose the worldly politicians of the South should accomplish such an expulsion; might not the effect be, to start the conscience of good men in that section into new life? Would they not begin to inquire, what it meant, that their adhesion to slavery was thus separating them from the whole Christian world? Might they not make a stand at last against politicians, and claim the right of free discussion? There are thousands at the South who hate slavery, but are afraid to brave the wrath of the oppressor by openly laboring for its overthrow. Let your society assume an anti-slavery position, and it would instantly embolden them, and if acts of violence were resorted to against your colporteurs, the indignation of the entire North combined with the aroused action of Christian men at the South, would ere long open the field again. Remember that the actual slave-holders are but three hundred and fifty thousand in number, and that if they strain the cord of tyranny over the three millions of non-slave-holding whites at the South too far, it will snap asunder.

But theory aside, we can present facts which prove that the South will not be closed to your operations should you assume anti-slavery ground. The American Missionary Association has during the past year sustained three colporteurs in the slave states, whose business has been in large part to distribute Bibles to slaves, and to circulate anti-slavery tracts and books among the whites. This work has been pursued without serious opposition, and with encouraging success. Each year finds the field enlarging. Besides these laborers, the association has organized eight churches in Kentucky and six in North Carolina, that do not receive slave-holders to communion, and sustains four

clerical missionaries, who in addition to their ordinary duties, lecture frequently and in many places against the sin of slavery. If then professed abolitionists find the field open, why need your society fear exclusion from the South for beginning to discharge this long-neglected duty? Such exclusion would be at the worst only partial, and in no state could it be permanent, while so far as ground was retained or regained, the victory for truth would be lasting and invaluable.

We have thus, brethren, at no little expense of labor to ourselves, and we fear of patience to you, gone over the entire subject in dispute. It has been painful to us to criticise the action of a great and good organization, but fidelity to truth seemed to require it. Pardon us, if in the ardor of discussion we have spoken too warmly or seemed to censure your course too severely. Weigh carefully the facts and arguments which we have presented, nor esteem them unworthy of notice till you have prayerfully compared them with the word of God. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." We appreciate the work in which the Tract Society is engaged, so vast in extent, so comprehensive in scope, so successful in prosecution. Our only desire is, to aid its progress, to save it from inconsistency, and to enlarge its resources. Not for what it has done so much as for what it has not done, do we send this remonstrance, saying with the Saviour, "These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone."

Wishing you all prosperity in the faithful prosecution of your work, we remain,

Your brethren in the gospel of Christ,

THE MEMBERS

Of the Fourth Congregational Church, Hartford, Conn.